

# KDHE Launches Choose Respect Initiative to Prevent Dating Abuse

'Choose Respect' - a new statewide initiative aimed at reducing the incidence of violence or rape among teenagers has been launched in partnership between the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Choose Respect initiative aims to help adolescents develop healthy relationships by offering positive messages about giving and getting respect.

A recent study published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Report (MMWR) shows that adolescents who report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year are more likely to report binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fighting and current sexual activity.

The national study examined data from CDC's 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to evaluate the link between physical dating violence and selected behaviors that can place adolescents' health and wellbeing at risk. According to the report, one in 11 high school students reported physical dating violence victimization in the past 12 months equating to nearly 1.5 million high school students a year.

According to the 2005 Kansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), approximately 1 in 12 high school students reported having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse.

"These numbers show dating abuse goes beyond physical injury," said Howard Rodenberg, Director of KDHE's Division of Health. "It's an issue that affects the health and wellbeing of adolescents. That's why we are taking action, not only to reduce immediate consequences, but also to prevent the long-term effects dating abuse can have on adolescents' health."

## **Implementation of Choose Respect Initiative:**

To help change this situation KDHE, is implementing the Choose Respect initiative. KDHE's efforts are part of a broad initiative, developed by the CDC, to help adolescents form healthy relationships to prevent dating abuse before it starts. This national effort is designed to motivate adolescents to challenge harmful beliefs about dating abuse and take steps to form respectful relationships.

Research shows that reaching adolescents early – even before they start to date – is an important step in preventing dating abuse. As adolescents grow, they learn behaviors that will shape future relationships. The Choose Respect initiative aims to help adolescents develop healthy relationships by offering positive messages about giving and getting respect.

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“Relationships can be one of the best - and most challenging - parts of an adolescent’s world. Our investment in Choose Respect is an investment in a healthy future for adolescents,” Rodenberg said. “We are capitalizing on the positive power of adolescents using the one rule we can all follow – treat others like you want to be treated – helping to prevent harmful relationships before they even start.”

### **June 1 Media Campaign Launch:**

KDHE will launch a statewide media campaign June 1 using broadcast commercials on TV, radio and cable in addition to billboards and other media.

Choose Respect events with KDHE are part of broader community prevention efforts by Choose Respect community agencies in nine other cities, Hartford, Conn., Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Washington D.C., to create awareness of the initiative’s themes and resources among 11 to 14 year-olds and their parents. Using their own programs and Choose Respect’s online games and interactive learning tools, television and radio spots, activity ideas, streaming video clips and clickable quizzes, each community is working to ensure that messages reach adolescents and increase awareness of the importance of respecting friends and peers and to teach skills that help adolescents form healthy relationships.



Choose Respect billboards will be on display in various Kansas communities to support this new campaign sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### **Learn more about Choose Respect:**

The Choose Respect initiative is designed to encourage positive action on the part of adolescents to form healthy, respectful relationships. To learn more, go to [www.chooserespect.org](http://www.chooserespect.org).